

# How to Legally Establish Absolute Speed Limit Zones

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Speed is a primary factor in all modes of transportation, and it is a basic measure of traffic performance.

In order to establish the proper speed limit, a speed survey must be conducted. This method is usually done by radar at selected locations under the proper conditions.

If the proper speed survey is successful, it will reduce accidents, create a better traffic flow, aid enforcement and prevent unnecessary delays.

The speed study should be conducted during off-peak hours and such surveys include at least 100 vehicles in each direction or a two-hour time period, whichever comes first.

After the survey is completed, the data from the "Speed Check Filed Sheet" which includes the location, day, date, time, direction, pavement width, weather, road surface condition, type of pavement and sight distance is checked for the 85% speed and pace rate.

This analysis is used to request the posting of speed for the selected section of highway surveyed. Of course past accident information is considered and is used as part of the guidelines in the total survey.

After the results of the survey are completed, a request for a change of speed can be made in the form of an "ordinance" to the "local authorities" with the data attached listing the recommended speed. The ordinance is then advertised in two local newspapers of different political faiths at two time periods of one to two weeks apart. At the completion of this time and advertisement factor, the established speed limit becomes an enforceable law.

Following is copy of pertinent ordinance material.

## **Procedures for Altering Maximum and Absolute Speed Limits on All Streets and Highways Within This State**

The alteration of any maximum speed limit shall be established in accordance with the following procedures:

1. All speed limits other than maximum lawful speeds established by law must be determined by a proper engineering and traffic in-

vestigation. The engineering investigation will include, but not be limited to, the following procedures:

- a. Speed checks will be performed during off-peak hours, clear weather, and at locations where an accurate representative speed sample can be obtained.
  - b. Speed checks shall include all traffic past a given point on the highway. Separate tabulations must be made for each direction of travel at each check point.
  - c. A speed sample will include the recording of the speeds of at least 100 vehicles in each direction or the recording of the speeds of all vehicles past a given point for a period of at least two (2) hours.
  - d. Speed checks will be taken at selective locations near where transitions in vehicular speeds are occurring.
  - e. A line diagram (to suitable scale) showing the cross roads, highways alignment, speed check locations, existing speed zones, and proposed speed zones will be a part of each field investigation report.
  - f. An investigation of the accident experience within the proposed speed zones shall be made.
  - g. Trial runs through the proposed speed zone should be made at both the existing speed and at the proposed speed. This trial run procedure will help indicate the degree of safety and comfort provided for motorists.
  - h. Particular attention (including additional speed checks) must be given to locations where sight distance is limited.
  - i. All absolute speed limits determined by engineering and traffic investigations shall be established at the first 5 mph increment at or above the 85 percentile speed unless there are hidden hazards of an exceptional nature as revealed by accident experience and by the study of the location. In no case shall the absolute limit be established more than seven (7) miles per hour below or five (5) miles per hour above the 85 percentile speed.
2. In no case shall a speed reduction between successive zones be in excess of 25 miles per hour.
  3. All speed limits shall be established in multiples of five (5) miles per hour.

#### **Procedures for the Establishment of Nighttime Speed Limits on All Streets and Highways Within This State**

1. Nighttime speed limits shall be determined on the basis of an

engineering and traffic investigation.

2. Nighttime speed limits shall be applicable only during the hours of darkness, and there will be no need for time notations on the signs.

3. Nighttime speed limits shall not be established in conjunction with Minimum Speed Limits or any other Special Speed Limit.

4. Nighttime speed limits should not be considered in areas provided with adequate, continuous lighting.

5. The nighttime speed limit sign shall be white on black.

6. All nighttime absolute speed limits determined by engineering and traffic investigation shall be established at the first 5 mph increment at or above the 85 percentile speed unless there are hidden hazards of an exceptional nature as revealed by accident experience and by the study of the location. In no case shall the absolute limit be established more than seven (7) miles per hour below or five (5) miles per hour above the 85 percentile speed.

7. Nighttime speed zones should be considered in areas where there is a high incidence of nighttime accidents and where speed could be a contributing factor to these accidents. Nighttime speed limits should be considered where the number of nighttime accidents is more than  $1/2$  the number of daytime accidents.



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